

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW AND REGULATORY GUIDANCE

On-site wastewater treatment systems (OWTS) treat wastewater and discharge effluent. This Initial Study (IS) has been prepared by the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) to evaluate the potential environmental effects of implementing proposed statewide regulations for siting, installation, operation, and maintenance of OWTS. The State Water Board is required to draft and implement statewide OWTS regulations under Assembly Bill 885 (Chapter 781, Statutes of 2000), which was approved by the California State Legislature and signed into law in September 2000 and codified as Sections 13290-13291.7, Chapter 4.5, Division 7 of the California Water Code; see Appendix A.

This IS has been prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Pub. Res. Code Section 21000 et seq.) and the State CEQA Guidelines (14 California Code of Regulations [CCR] Section 15000 et seq.). An IS is conducted by a lead agency to determine if a project may have a significant effect on the environment. In accordance with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064(a), an environmental impact report (EIR) must be prepared if there is substantial evidence (including the results of an IS) that a project may have a significant effect on the environment. A negative declaration (ND) or mitigated negative declaration (MND) may be prepared if the lead agency determines that the project would have no potentially significant impacts or that revisions made to the project, or agreed to by the applicant, mitigate the potentially significant impacts to a less-than-significant level (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064[f]). Based on the results of this IS, the State Water Board has determined that an EIR will be prepared for this project. For this reason, a Notice of Preparation of an EIR (NOP) has been issued along with this IS.

The proposed project under CEQA is the adoption and implementation of the proposed statewide OWTS regulations as required by AB 885 (and the related California Water Code sections, included in Appendix A of this IS). These proposed regulations would be administered by the State Water Board and would be incorporated into the water quality control plans (also referred to as basin plans) of all nine California Regional Water Quality Control Boards (Regional Water Boards). The Regional Water Boards would implement these regulations along with those authorized local agencies (ALAs) that would be given authority by the Regional Water Boards to implement and enforce the regulations.

1.2 LEAD AGENCY

Under CEQA, the lead agency is the public agency with primary responsibility over the proposed project. The State Water Board is the lead agency under CEQA for this project because of its regulatory authority over water quality in California and, as specified in the legislation, its lead role in developing the new OWTS regulations.

1.3 PURPOSE AND ORGANIZATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

The purpose of this IS is to evaluate the potential environmental effects of the proposed project. Because the State Water Board has determined that an EIR will be prepared, this IS identifies which environmental issues will be carried forward for further evaluation in the EIR and those issues that will not be assessed in the EIR because the proposed project does not have the potential to significantly affect related resources.

This document is organized as follows:

- ▶ Chapter 1, “Introduction,” describes the purpose and organization of this document.
- ▶ Chapter 2, “Background and Description of the Proposed Project,” provides background information about the initiating legislation, briefly describes how OWTS operate, identifies issues of concern that were the

impetus behind passage of AB 885, lists the project objectives, and provides a brief description of the proposed project and its alternatives.

- ▶ Chapter 3, “Potential Environmental Impacts,” explains the approach and assumptions used to conduct the initial environmental study and that will form the basis of the EIR analysis. Chapter 3 uses the topics provided in the State CEQA Guidelines’ Environmental Checklist (Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines) to evaluate a range of potential impacts.
- ▶ Appendix A contains Sections 13290-13291.7, Chapter 4.5, Division 7 of the California Water Code, which are the codified requirements of AB 885.
- ▶ Appendix B contains Section 13269 of the California Water Code, which includes the codified requirements of SB 390 and SB 923.
- ▶ Appendix C contains the proposed OWTS regulations.
- ▶ Appendix D contains Water Code Sections 13260 and 13263, which describe the process of establishing waste discharge requirements (WDRs).

1.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Chapter 3 of this document contains the Environmental Checklist and a related discussion of each type of potential impact that could result from implementation of the proposed project. Based on the results of this analysis, Chapter 3 identifies those types of resources that could be significantly affected by the proposed project, and these potential impacts will be carried forward for further evaluation in the EIR. Those resources that would likely not be affected, or would experience less-than-significant impacts, also are identified in Chapter 3.

1.5 PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENT

This IS is available for a 60-day public review period beginning June 8, 2005, and ending on August 8, 2005. Written comments may be submitted by August 8 to:

Todd Thompson, P.E., Program Manager
State Water Resources Control Board
Division of Water Quality
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Sacramento, CA 95812-2231
email: TThompson@waterboards.ca.gov

1.6 SCOPING MEETINGS

During the public review period on the IS and NOP, a series of public scoping meetings will be held to inform agencies and the public about the proposed project and to provide opportunity for public comment on the NOP and issues to be evaluated in the EIR. The public scoping meetings are scheduled for the following dates and locations:

City	Place	Address	Date	Time
Riverside	Art Pick Council Chamber	3900 Main Street	Thursday, July 14	7 p.m.
Santa Rosa	North Coast Regional Water Board Hearing	5550 Skyline Boulevard, Suite A	Monday, July 18	7 p.m.

City	Place	Address	Date	Time
	Room			
Malibu	Council Chambers	City Hall 23815 Stuart Ranch Rd.	Tuesday, July 19	7 p.m.
Sacramento	Sierra Hearing Room, 2 nd floor	Cal-EPA Building 1001 I Street	Wednesday, July 20	7 p.m.
Redding	City of Redding Community Room	777 Cypress Avenue	Thursday, July 21	7 p.m.

Your participation is encouraged and you may provide the State Water Board with written comments as noted above or provide verbal comments at one of the scoping meetings listed above.